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——In Sylvis AUTUMNI frigore primo
Lapsa cadunt folia.—VIRG. Aen.

The dark spread woods by AUTUMN's gales subdued,
With the red ruin of their leaves are strewed.

THE reflections produced by the revolution of the seasons are among the most pleasing as well as profitable exercises of the human mind. The heart that cannot derive instruction from their recurrence must be lost to much that is good, and pure, and holy; and ought rather to be considered as isolated in its own narrow

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sphere of bigotted self-communion, than as holding anything in common with mankind. From the laughing Spring, and the golden summer; from the sober Autumn, and Winter, 'clad in storms', may be derived lessons of instruction, and rules for life. The analogy which they bear to the rise and decline of the human constitution ought to be too forcibly impressed upon every mind, to allow it ~~for a moment~~ to forget what they inculcate.

But we are at the same time compelled to acknowledge, that a dull indifference to the seasons is not always the result of apathy or of narrowness of soul. The cares of life may blunt the perception, or its amusements may shut out the blasts of winter and the breezes of the summer. The levity and trifling gaiety which we behold pervading a large proportion of mankind, continually divert their eyes from the contemplation of natures periodic changes. To those whose minds are steady enough to gaze

upon them with delight, the present essay is more immediately addressed.

Different minds, will, according to their various temperaments and habits of reflection, regard with pleasure different seasons of the year. It is natural for the young and the gay to delight in the balmy season of returning spring; and even age itself looks upon that period with emotions of pleasure. The scholar and the student, alike with the child of fashionable dissipation will hail the approach of winter as affording them respectively the means of indulging in their favorite pursuits; while the agriculturist and the lover of a rural life, would desire a perpetual summer. We trust we shall not appear singular, ~~in~~ if we ourselves give the preference to Autumn, whose deep & solemn hues are at this time darkening our skies and shadowing our forests.

Without allowing ourselves for

a moment to question the wisdom of Providence in the distribution of the seasons, and without a wish to disparage ~~either~~ the advantages of either of them, we may surely be permitted to state our reasons for preferring autumn to the rest. Though poets have celebrated the charms of spring in all the luxuriant colors of a glowing imagination, yet nature cannot be said to have assumed any garb as yet permanently pleasing; and the summer, prone in its heats, and enervating in its influence, only deprives both mind & body of the vigor and energy they possess in more temperate seasons. The cool murmurs of the fountain, and the delightful retreat of the wood, instead of alleviating, tend only to add to the relaxation of the mental powers. We must exclaim with the poet of nature,

"The pale descending year, yet pleasing still,
"A gentler mood inspires."—

we are compelled to take refuge in the solemnizing season in which nature is preparing for the period of her desolation. We are neither relaxed by the heat of summer, nor frozen by the cold of winter. We can roam abroad and mark the face of nature in all her variety without the inconveniency of either; while at home, in the retirement of the closet, in the hours of solitary employment, the mind is enabled to give full scope to its powers, and to bring its energies into action.

Independently however of all these physical advantages of autumn, we think that its influence upon the reflective mind is very profitable. We are not disposed to make our fellow-beings either gloomy or hypochondriac; but we are of opinion that a continual gaiety and frivolity of disposition is equally incompatible with our character as reasonable, and our interest as immortal beings. When we look around us, and behold the leaves strewed in

mournful profusion on every side; — the dark forests tinged with the russet hues of autumn; when we hear the winds sighing amid their scattered victims of their progress; — we are reminded that there is a time in the life of man, when the visions of youthful and of maturity shall have past away; when something more substantial shall be required to add comfort to life, and perpetuity to enjoyment. In autumn we behold the various tribes of nature preparing for the approach of winter; the fleeting birds seeking some happier & warmer climate; the torpor animals sinking into that repose, while their wearied frames require, or laying up their humble stores against the barrenness of the advancing season. The husbandman collects his scattered flocks, and provides for their comfort; his sickle cuts the yellow grain, and his barns receive the produce of his labors. Indeed every where are to be seen the preparations for winter; — there is but one place where we fear

they are too often forgotten — in the heart. In our figurative autumn, we forget that life is soon to close; — we are indifferent about our preparations for the winter of death. We hear the blast of time howling around our heads, and quenching our glories in the dust, but we attend not to its warning voice, nor take counsel how soon this cumbrous coil of mortality is to be "shuffled off."

From what we have already remarked, our readers may perhaps conclude, that we are ourselves descending the vale of years, and weary of life ourselves, with to throw a gloom over the declining hours of our fellow-beings. But we would not be thus understood. Our admonitions are addressed to all. The autumn of life, strange and paradoxical as it may appear, begins with its spring, robes the luxuriance of its summer, and adds a more melancholy coloring to the ~~closing~~ gaping event of its entire

course. What mortal tongue can say when the winter of death shall commence, and when the march of the destroyer shall be heard? Who can calculate for a moment on the duration of his existence, or the enjoyment of his health? From the gloom of the future we cannot borrow one single gleam of intelligence; shrouded in impenetrable darkness must be all that is to befall us in this mortal life. We ourselves have seen and mourned over the untimely fall of those who had every reason to anticipate many years of life and health and happiness. We ourselves have beheld the destroyer pause on his desolating course to sweep into the dust the pride of life, the charms of beauty, the beams of rising intelligence. If we have been spared to mark the wreck of the past, are we to presume that we shall yet be preserved, or are we to congratulate ourselves that we still survive?—

If all this be true, (and who can deny it?) it must appear evident how important it is to bear the awful truth in mind. It should be remembered in the night of sorrow, and the hour of gaiety. It should temper without overshadowing the exuberance of mirth; quench the overflowings of frivolity, and give that dignity to every thought and every action which a being like man ought to possess. Instead of throwing a gloom over life, it will only cast that mixture of pensiveness with cheerfulness, which stamps at once the mind given to reflection. It will elevate us from the grovelling propensities of corrupted nature, to the contemplation of higher and holier objects. It will bid us to be continually laying in that heavenly treasure, which shall abide when the wintry storm is gone, and this earthly sphere itself is dissolved and swept away like a scroll.

But to return to the contemplation of the season itself. It is a time altogether calculated to inspire that species of melancholy, which is pleasing to the mind; which no other season of the year can inspire. The general pensive cast of natural scenery, the objects which surround us, the departing birds, the rustling & withered leaves, the dim and ~~solemn~~ shrouded skies; all convey sensations to the heart of the observer, of deep, solemnizing emotion. But we should be at the same cautious of relapsing into that madness of melancholy, to which some minds are subject; which blackens every prospect, and renders cheerless the whole course of life. Let the contemplation of autumn and all its changeful hues not deprive us of our cheerfulness, though it fills us with serious thoughts; — if we suffer it so to do, it will enfit us to make that application to

our bosoms & lives of which we have been speaking, it will fling us desolate & gloomy on the shore of life, without a comfort and without a hope. But if we make a due improvement of the season, and draw from it just lessons of instruction, the observant eye shall not hereafter behold in us

> The withered frame – the wan'd mind –
> The wreck by passion left behind –
> The shrivelled scroll – the scatter'd leaf,
> Sear'd by the autumn blast of grief; –

we shall be resigned and happy, whether the gentler seasons of life & of nature are laughing around us, or the storms of winter are hurrying us to the silence of the tomb.

E.